Welcome to Unkar Delta, home to many prehistoric peoples of the Grand Canyon—most notably, ancestral Pueblo people To some, they are known as "Anasazi," but to the Hopi people, they are "Hisatsinom," people of long ago, the ancestors of the Pueblo people.

Human use of Unkar Delta began around AD 850. While the excavators suggested four distinct phases of occupation, recent interpre tation suggests a gradual process of growth to

peak population around the year AD 1100. For reasons not yet fully understood, the Pueblo people migrated away from the delta by AD 1200. To the modern Hopi, their clans that migrated from Unkar did so in fulfillment of the covenant with the spiritual guardian, Ma'saw, so that today, the Hopis see Unkar as a "footprint" of the clans who once inhabited this village.

Farming was the key to life on Unkar Delta. Early living sites were built on the fertile terraces along Unkar Creek. As the population grew, and with it the

demand for food, living sites were moved to the talus slopes above the floodplain to make room for more crops.

During summer months, farming was probably done on the Canyon's cooler, moister north rim rather than on Unkar Delta. Analysis of ceramic fragments found in both areas suggest that the people living at Walhalla Glades, on the North Rim, were closely connected to those

living at Unkar. Both groups used the sam type of clay to make their pottery.

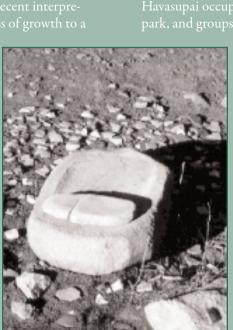
By the year AD 1200, the ancestral Pueblo people appear to have left Unkar Delta and, for that matter, most of Grand Canyon. Evidence suggests that areas of the South Rim were occupied until AD 1225. Thereafter, the Canyon was uninhabited for some seventy-five years. By AD 1300, ancestors to the Hualapai and Havasupai occupied western portions of the park, and groups of Southern Paiute and

Navajo moved into parts of the Canyon. No other permanent residents were known until the "Anglo" expansion of the late 1800s

To date, more than 2700 archeological sites have been ound in Grand Canyon. These ancient remains are silent testimony to the lives of people who made the Canyon home for more than 4000 years.

If you find an archeological site while at Grand
Canyon, please mark its location on a map, take pictures if possible, and contact a park archeologist or ranger.

Archeological remains are vulnerable and rreplaceable. Our key to unraveling the past is naving all artifacts intact and in position relative to one another. We thank you for leaving them exactly as they are. Not only will disturbing the sites destroy valuable information, it is illegal. Federal penalties may be imposed. Your cooperation is appreciated. **



Metate found at Unkar Delta. Metates were used as if possible, and contact a grinding tools. Photo by Mike Buchheit park archeologist or ranger

ALKING TOUR OF UNKAR DELTA

nkar Delta trail is a 0.8 mile loop, over alluvial terraces and drainages. Allow approximately forty-five minutes, round-trip. This trail system has been developed to permit visitation while protecting the fragile desert environment and prehistoric remains.

The walk you are about to take will pass by the ruins of many ancestral Puebloan dwellings. Remember that the sites along the low terraces were occupied earlier in the history of the delta (AD 850-1050), those on the talus slopes, later (AD 1100-1200). It is unlikely that any dwelling was occupied for more than thirty years, and not all were in use at the same time. Length of life for the people living on Unkar was not long, averaging thirty-four years.

UN-

Three distinct architectural components found at this site suggest that modifications were made during the years it was occupied. The shallow, circular pit was probably a pithouse used early in the site's history (AD 1000). The masonry habitation rooms, storage rooms, enclosures, and adobe-lined basins were added sometime between AD 1070 and 1175. The site was probably occupied by a small family, providing both living quarters and storage space.

UN-6

At some time during its history (AD 1070-1175) this site burned and was rebuilt. Four discrete living episodes were identified, all but the first involving architectural modifications. It is likely that only one habitation room was used at any one time by a family. The adjacent walls and alignments suggest that the site may have been used for agriculture before final abandonment.

UN-4

The layering of trash deposits found at this site suggests at least three occupations between AD 1070 and 1175. One large "living" room is present. An external firepit and two clusters of wall alignments are also present on the site. Only a small portion of the site was excavated, consequently, only a partial story can be told.

UN-42

At this more recent site (AD 1130-1200), a single semisubterranean room with firepit was constructed by lining at least two walls with masonry. Entrance into this structure was probably at the ground level, with upright slabs being placed in the southeast corner marking the entry. The presence of small beams, poles, and sticks lying in the fill above the floor indicates that the room was probably covered by a full

Terrece

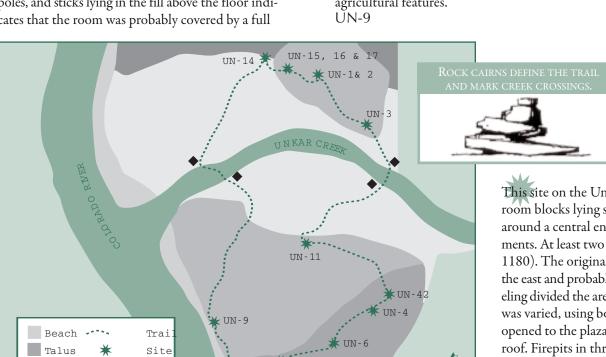
Dune

ock Cairn

roof. Since only a portion of the site was excavated, functions for the visible features are not known.

UN-11

These two rooms were constructed of limestone blocks, cobbles, and slabs wetlaid with adobe sometime between AD 1070-1170. The larger room was probably used for living, the smaller for storage. A single occupation of the site is suggested by the limited features and deposits. Visible walls represent foundations, with original wall height in the larger room being about 2H feet. The presence of adobe mortar suggests that the interior of the rooms had been plastered. Exterior alignments may indicate agricultural features.





This site on the Unkar loop is one of the most interesting. It is comprised of two room blocks lying several meters apart. The western block contained four rooms around a central enclosure; the eastern block, one room and four outlying alignments. At least two remodeling phases took place during its occupation (AD 1070-1180). The original structure appears to have been a ramada-like enclosure, open to the east and probably roofed (numerous post holes were found). Subsequent remodeling divided the area into four smaller rooms facing a central plaza. Construction was varied, using both double- and single-thickness walls. Two of the rooms opened to the plaza at ground level. The others were probably entered through the roof. Firepits in three rooms suggest that these rooms were living quarters, while the other rooms were used for storage. A gradual decline in use of the site is indicated by the filling of two rooms with trash.

Further reading:

Archaeology of the Grand Canyon: Unkar Delta, Schwartz, Douglas W., Jane Kepp, and Richard C. Chapman; Grand Canyon Archæological Series, vol. 2, 1980, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe.

Written by Janet Balsom, Park Archeologist Design by Kim Buchheit Area map (above) and two site illustrations courtesy of School of American Research, Santa Fe, NM

Printed on recycled paper using vegetable-based inks.

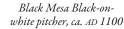


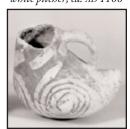
© Grand Canyon Association, 1995

W A L K I N G T O U R O F U N K A R D E L T A



Historic Havasupai pitch basket water container







Modern Hopi Jeddito Black-on-yellow vessel







Moenkopi Corrugated vessel, ca. AD 1100

UN-14

Two separate rooms are visible at this site, probably representing a family living area and storage room. A single occupation is suggested, at sometime between AD 1040 and 1170. The larger habitation room was built by partially digging into the slope. Three posts were found along the east wall. These posts, along with charred adobe and charcoal in the rubble, suggest that the room had a roof. Additional posts found outside the rooms may have been for sun shades or ramadas.

UN-15, 16 & 17

At these sites you will find the remains of unusual enclosures and agricultural features. No ceramics were found in association with UN-15 or UN-16, nor were there architectural components reminiscent of any known function. UN-17, however, contains the remains of a series of agricultural terraces built in and beside a small drainage. These terraces appear as parallel alignments of cobbles and limestone blocks following the contours of the slope and drainage. The Pueblo people were aware of natural processes and took advantage of favorable conditions. In this case they gained efficiency by utilizing natural drainage patterns. Ceramics found

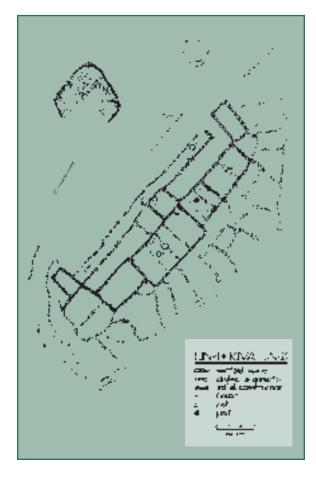
on the slope below the terraces suggest use sometime between AD 1070 and 1180.



Seven adjoining rooms form a U-shaped pueblo which opens eastward onto a plaza containing Kiva UN-2. No more than four families lived here at any one time. This site burned during its occupation (AD 1070-1160), and later inhabitants apparently used the debris-rich soil as garden plots. The alignments and enclosures seen here were constructed after the living areas were abandoned. Burned remnants found in the debris provide evidence of roof construction techniques typical of those used by the Puebloans (ie. beams and poles topped with adobe).



Five rooms form a U-shaped pueblo where at least two families lived (AD 1040-1160). The nearby kiva was built of drylaid stone rubble with an interior facing of wetlaid limestone blocks and cobble. A partial bench lines the north wall, and there is evidence that some remodeling did take place. The kiva, while often used for ceremonies, was also used as a meeting place and storage area. **



ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES IS NOT AN EXACT SCIENCE. SITES ON UNKAR DELTA AND WALHALLA GLADES HAVE BEEN DATED BY CERAMIC CROSS-DATING. VARIOUS CERAMIC TYPES ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN MADE AT CERTAIN TIMES. THESE KNOWN TYPES ARE THE BASES FOR ASSIGN-ING OCCUPATION DATES AT MOST ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES UNLESS ABSOLUTE DATES, SUCH AS TREE-RING OR CARBON 14, ARE AVAILABLE. ALL OCCUPATION DATES CITED IN THIS GUIDE ARE MAXIMUM RANGES AND ARE

DATING

Images of vessels on this page are NPS photos

Cover photo: View of Unkar Delta looking north.

NPS photo by Mike Quinn

Cover inset: Black Mesa Black-on-white pitcher found in small tributary canyon north of Unkar Delta in 1969. NPS photo

APPROXIMATE.

Unkar Delta

G U I D E

